

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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P R 072120Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2896

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: GOH-CAMPSEINO-CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2831, 2849, 2866

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE NATIONAL UNION OF CAMPESINOS (UNC)  
LEADERSHIP WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON ON JULY 3. THE FOLLOWING  
DAY UNC ISSUED A DECLARATION CALLING ON CAMPESINOS TO RETURN  
TO WORK AND REFRAIN FROM ACTIONS THAT COULD LEAD TO A CONFRONT-  
ATION BETWEEN CAMPESINOS AND THE ARMED FORCES. IN A PRESS  
CONFERENCE THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION DENIED THAT ANY  
GUERRILLAS EXIST IN HONDURAS. A CHURCH DECLARATION, STRONGLY  
CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT, WAS READ FROM THE PULPITS ON  
JULY 6. THE GOVERNMENT CLEARLY WANTS TO CALM THE SITUATION  
BUT IS CONFRONTED WITH THE PROSPECT OF A CONFRONTATION WITH  
THE CHURCH. END SUMMARY.

1. SIX LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF CAMPESINOS (UNC)  
AND THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (CGT) WERE RELEASED  
FROM PRISON ON THE EVENING OF JULY 3. THE LEADERS INCLUDED  
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THE PRESIDENT OF THE CGT, JULIAN LAGOS, AND THE SECRETARY-

GENERAL OF UNC, PEDRO MENDOZA. ACCORDING TO A GOH COMMUNIQUE, THEY WERE RELEASED BECAUSE THE SITUATION THAT CAUSED THEIR ARREST NO LONGER EXISTED.

2. ON JULY 4, UNC ISSUED A DECLARATION WHOSE MAIN POINTS FOLLOW:

- A) PEDRO MENDOZA WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON ON JULY 3 TOGETHER WITH OTHER UNC LEADERS SO THAT A DIALOGUE COULD BE INITIATED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CAMPESINOS ON AGRARIAN REFORM;
- B) ALL UNC REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE SO THAT SPECULATION ABOUT THEIR ACTIONS AND MOTIVES COULD NOT BE USED AGAINST UNC;
- C) CAMPESINOS SHOULD RETURN TO WORK SO THAT NATIONAL AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION DOES NOT SUFFER;
- D) SUCH A SITUATION WILL ALLOW THE ARMY TO MAKE AN INVESTIGATION OF THOSE ORGANIZATIONS WHICH WISH TO BRING ABOUT A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE CAMPESINOS AND THE ARMED FORCES;
- E) THE ARMED FORCES ARE NOT CARRYING OUT REPRESSION OR PERSECUTION OF CAMPESINOS; AND
- F) CAMPESINOS AND THE HONDURAN PEOPLE IN GENERAL SHOULD CONTINUE TO REMAIN ALERT TO THE DECLARATIONS OF UNC.

3. ON JULY 6, THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION, TOURISM AND CULTURE, LT. COLONEL EFRAIN GONZALEZ, GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE. AMONG OTHER POINTS, HE STATED THAT THE UNC AND CGT OFFICES WERE BEING RETURNED TO THOSE ORGANIZATIONS. HE DENIED A REPORT ORIGINATING IN LONDON THAT STATED THE GOVERNMENT HAD CLOSED WELFARE CENTERS AND HAD DEPORTED VOLUNTARY WORKERS. HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT DEPORTED ANYBODY. HE EMPHATICALLY DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF ANY GUERRILLAS IN HONDURAS AND SPECIFICALLY DENIED REPORTS THAT THERE WERE 600 GUERRILLAS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF OLANCHO. HE COMMENTED THAT THE ARMED FORCES WERE INVESTIGATING THE SITUATION IN OLANCHO TO GUARANTEE PUBLIC PEACE AND SECURITY. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO CARRY OUT AGRARIAN REFORM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LAW, BUT REFUSED TO ACCEPT PRESSURES FROM ANY GROUP THAT WOULD DISTURB THAT PROCESS.

4. A CHURCH STATEMENT STRONGLY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT  
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WAS READ IN THE PULPITS ON SUNDAY, JULY 6. THE MAIN POINTS FOLLOW:

- A) THE PRESENT CRISIS HAS ITS ORIGIN IN THE LAMENTABLE INJUSTICE SUFFERED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE HONDURAN PEOPLE;
- B) THE CHURCH'S INVESTIGATION OF THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN JUTICALPA CONTRADICT THE GOVERNMENT'S VERSION. IT IS EASY TO PROVE THAT THE ATTACK ON THE INSTITUTO 18TH DE FEBRERO WAS COLDLY PLANNED AND CARRIED OUT;

C) PADRE CASIMIRO AND PADRE IVAN BETANCOURT WERE CAPTURED BY MILITARY TROOPS ON JUNE 25 AND THEY HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD OF SINCE.

D) IT IS THE CHURCH'S IMPRESSION THAT THIS REPRESSION IS DIRECTED AT LIMITING THE WORK OF THE CHURCH. HOWEVER, THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL WHICH INVOLVES THE DENUNCIATION OF INJUSTICE AND THE PROMOTION OF JUSTICE;

E) THE CHURCH, THEREFORE, DEMANDS THE FOLLOWING:

1. THE GOVERNMENT MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO MAINTAIN AN EQUILIBRIUM AMONG THE SOCIAL CLASSES;
2. THE GOVERNMENT TAKE RADICAL MEASURES TO CHANGE UNJUST SOCIAL STRUCTURES;
3. THAT THE AGRARIAN REFORM BE FULLY CARRIED OUT;
4. THAT THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN OLANCHO BE ESTABLISHED AND THE STATUS OF BETANCOURT AND CASIMIRO BE CLARIFIED;
5. THE WAVE OF REPRESSION AGAINST THE PEOPLE AND MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH BE ENDED;
6. THAT THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH BE UNDERSTOOD AND RESPECTED; AND
7. THAT CHURCH PERSONNEL BE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO THEIR FORMER POSITIONS.

F.) LET ALL CATHOLICS KNOW THAT THE CHURCH IN HONDURAS HAS NOT DISAPPEARED AND IS CONSTANTLY DEFENDING THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

5. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THE CAMPESINO LEADERSHIP THAT WILL PERMIT A RETURN OF PEACE TO THE RURAL AREAS. THE UNC DECLARATION TO ITS MEMBERS WAS THE QUID PRO QUO FOR THE RELEASE OF THE ORGANIZATION'S LEADERS. CLEARLY THE GOVERNMENT IS DESIROUS OF CALMING THE SITUATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, THE CHURCH STATEMENT IS A CLEAR CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S  
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TRUTHFULNESS AND GENERAL RELIABILITY. UNDOUBTEDLY THE GOH IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH BECAUSE IT PRESENTS THE SPECTRE OF A CONTINUING CHURCH-STATE CONFRONTATION. THE REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMISSION ON THE EVENTS IN OLANCHO WILL BE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE IN DETERMINING THE COURSE SUCH A CONFRONTATION MIGHT TAKE.  
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